

Demolition has begun at CFAC

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Crews from Calbag Resources have begun to remove equipment from the closed Columbia Falls Aluminum Co. plant in preparation for an auction.

Cliff Boyd, director of asset recovery for the West Coast demolition and recycling company, said he has nine workers with him who worked previously on the demolition of the aluminum smelter in Goldendale, Washington.

“Some of these guys worked at the smelter there before hiring on with Calbag and have stayed on with the company,” he said.

Boyd, who attended a Glencore community planning meeting in Columbia Falls on May 14, said he plans to hire about 20 workers for the two- to three-year CFAC plant demolition, and perhaps as many as 100 workers during certain peak times.

Benefits to the local economy will include food and lodging for his workers, oxyacetylene and other supplies for demolition work, and hundreds of thousands of gallons of vehicle fuel, he said.

“I plan on renting six houses for my workers,” he said. “They can’t live in motels for that long and they can’t stay in an RV camp during the winter.”

Lowboy trailers have been passing through Columbia Falls bearing giant pieces of heavy equipment headed for the CFAC plant. Boyd said he brought in a 700-ton shear capable of cutting huge I-beams in half.

“It took me two days to take it apart for shipment and it’ll take me more than that to put it back together,” he explained.

Metal will be cut into pieces and stored in different piles east of Potroom 10 before being loaded into railroad cars. Boyd will also have about half a dozen giant nippers to cut I-beams and pipes as the buildings are demolished.

Boyd also said he has buyers for just about all the specialized materials at the plant — carbon from anodes, coal tar pitch, petroleum coke and aluminum oxide ore.

Following the May 14 meeting, Boyd spoke with Nikki Stephan, an emergency planner with Flathead County’s Office Emergency Services. He said he had all the necessary safety plans prepared for her office.

Many of the requirements are similar to those at other sites Calbag worked at, including the Smurfit-Stone pulp plant in Missoula and the Asarco smelter in East Helena, he said.